



# ALLOTMENTS & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

## July monthly planner of jobs to do

July is the month that veg harvests roll through with increased profusion - not forgetting all the soft fruits at their best. This is now high summer and the days are - very slowly - closing in. This affects the whole shape and tenor of the garden as the northern hemisphere flowers try desperately to seed from now on before winter arrives, but the plants from closer to the equator come into their own, relishing the warm nights that - hopefully - accompany the warm days. So dahlias, cannas and gingers all flourish and the tender annuals really kick in with a burst of colour that will carry through to autumn.

### BASIC GARDENING JOBS

- **Pick** all sweet peas every 10 days or so to encourage more blooms. Give plants a weekly high-potassium feed such as tomato food, and aim to keep the soil damp for a long-lasting display.
- **Compost** salad crops that are past their best and sow new ones or plant out seedlings.
- **Snip** the conical spent flowers off dahlias
- **Save** seed from spring flowering plants, such as alpines. Clean the chaff off and keep in a cool, dark, dry place.
- **Cut** and dry everlasting flowers, hanging them upside-down, to keep their form, in a dark spot.
- **Cut** back spring-flowering perennial clumps, such as lupins and delphiniums.
- **Sprinkle** general-purpose fertiliser in between herbaceous perennials and water it in well.
- **Pinch** out flowers that have started to fade, by hand. Spend 10 minutes every day enjoying this bit of light gardening - it's a great time to reflect and you'll really notice the difference. Bedding plants normally flower right through the summer, but they'll do far better and look much tidier if you take time to deadhead them, otherwise some plants will just stop flowering and go to seed.
- **Garden** centres and nurseries are selling off the last of the summer flowers now at bargain prices. Choose hardy perennials for flowers next year then trim them down low and soak thoroughly. Repot or plant out and keep watered while they get established.
- **Order** your bulbs now to take advantage of the wide choice available - it's not too early! Some spring bulbs can be permanently planted to give the garden early colour. Consider adding scillas, *Chionodoxa* (glory-of-the-snow) and Ornithogalum to borders, or creating a pretty display by naturalising them in grass. Most spring bulbs don't mind the foliage cover of summer perennials, so they mix well. Daffodils, hyacinths and tulips make cheerful displays, and are good choices for colourful containers next year.
- **Plan** watering by prioritising plants that need water most as it's a precious resource. Containers should be watered almost every day - even when it rains, the water will drop off the leaves with little reaching the roots. The most efficient way to water is to take off the rose on the watering can and direct all the water onto the plant's root zone. In borders, target plants that are newly planted and soak the ground around them every few days. If a scorching-hot day is forecast, do it early in the morning before the water can evaporate
- **Want** to compost your grass clippings but don't want your heap to turn slimy. Mixing in soil with your clippings will help them rot down quickly.
- **Prick** out seedlings individually or put several in around the edge of a large pot to make an instant clump. Use a dibber or pencil to ease a seedling gently from the soil. Handle the seedling by the leaves and plant firmly into new compost. Summer sown perennials and biennials can be pricked out now if they have two leaves. They will then grow on quickly and develop into strong plants that can be put into the borders in the autumn.
- **Be** super-efficient with the amount of water you use in the garden by using an irrigation system. They are easier than you would think and now is an ideal time to install one as temperatures peak. The best ones water the soil and therefore the roots rather than spray the leaves. The most sustainable systems

are connected to rainwater butts, but you'll need to fit a pump to achieve a similar pressure to a mains tap. Set it to water at time intervals required: containers and vegetable crops for 30 minutes every day, borders for a similar time but just once a week. Some systems come with a sensor that monitors the soil's moisture content and waters when it is needed, and some can be controlled remotely by an app on your smart phone. The more sophisticated the system the more expensive, but it's an investment you'll appreciate for years.

- **Divide** bearded irises once they have finished flowering to invigorate the display for next year. Cut back the old flower stems, then lift them and use a knife to divide the fleshy rhizome into smaller sections - make sure there are sets of leaves on each section. Plant them back or pot them up, keeping the rhizome exposed on the surface to stop it rotting. Trim the leaves too, and more will soon develop to strengthen the plant ready for next year's blooms.
- **Keep** mower blades high when cutting the lawn during dry weather.
- **Cut** shaggy hedges after checking no birds are nesting there.
- **Deal** with dried out containers by dripping water slowly into the middle of the compost.
- **Photograph** areas of the garden you want to revamp now, to guide your winter planning.
- **Look** out for bolted crops that have flowered early. At this point, succulent foliage becomes coarse and bitter. Harvest the leaves to eat then pull out the plants and sow another crop.
- **Continue** to stake perennials using canes and string.
- **Hardy** annuals, such as nigella and calendulas, stop flowering earlier than half-hardy annuals so be sure to collect their seed, ready to sow new plants in September.
- **Make** note of plants that are working well in your garden this summer, and any changes you would like to make, so you can begin to make a plan for next summer's planting.
- **Give** hanging baskets and seasonal containers a weekly feed with a high-potassium fertiliser to keep them flowering and looking their best right through summer.
- **July** is the ideal time to start sowing seed of biennials so plants get a head start, ready to provide cut flowers for your home from as early as May next year. Take a cue from nature and choose plants that naturally self-seed at this time of year, such as Icelandic poppy, dames violet, foxglove, honesty, sweet william and wallflower. Once the seedlings have emerged, wait until they have a pair of true adult leaves, and transplant them into individual pots. Grow them on and plant into their final positions this autumn. They will survive winter and be ready for cutting in early summer.

## PESTS & DISEASES

- **Rusts** are fungal diseases, making spots or pustules on plants in the summer. Cut down or pick off affected parts and throw them away or spray with a fungicide. Water plants thoroughly to help them fight disease too.
- **When** planting out spring cabbage put a "cabbage collar" on each plant to stop the cabbage root fly from laying its eggs nearby, or cover whole area with insect proof mesh.
- **Keep** a watch out for blackfly, greenfly and whitefly and spray with correct insecticide.
- **Red** spider mites can be a real nuisance in the greenhouse and attack any plant, sucking its sap. Look out for mottled foliage and small webs on the underside of the leaves. Spray with an insecticide containing bifenthrin or alternatively use a biological control.
- **To** guard against blossom end rot, apply liquid feed and never allow the compost or soil to dry out completely. The rot indicates a calcium deficiency, not caused by a lack of calcium in the compost, but by water not flowing well and delivering nutrients right to the plant's extremities. This will cause unripened circular patches at the base of tomatoes or undeveloped ends of fruit on cucumbers, courgettes or squash.
- **Look** out for blackened leaves, indicating blight on potatoes. If caught early you can cut off the leaves and still eat the crop.
- **Check** roses throughout summer as they are targets for pests and diseases, such as black spot fungus, aphids, sawfly larvae and leaf cutter bees. Remove leaves affected by black spot, and pick off sawfly larvae and aphids if you see them. Regular applications of organic sprays of pyrethrum, plant oils and fatty acids will also see them off. Encourage natural predators such as birds, ladybirds and lacewings by giving them places to nest nearby. Finally, clean around plants in spring and autumn to disturb nesting pests, and feed plants to keep them in good health.

- **Powdery** mildew is seen on a wide range of plants such as phlox. It's common in late summer when conditions are dry. You can treat ornamentals with fungicide or remove affected parts, but there are no fungicides available for fruit and vegetables.
- **Lily beetles** are at their peak in July as many new adults emerge. Remove them by hand.

### WILDLIFE

- **Keeping** ponds topped up in hot weather helps the wildlife that will drink from your pond including many insects. Do not remove the entire blanket weed as this is used as a landing area and also spongy by insects wanting to drink.
- **A** hedge of mixed species creates a valuable feature for wildlife to shelter and feed in. Cuttings taken now will root outside in a frame over the summer and put on enough growth next year to be planted the following autumn. Root plenty of cuttings to ensure you get a strong impenetrable hedge - and to allow for a few failures.
- **Keep** birdbaths topped up to provide water for feathered visitors to drink and bathe in. Remember to clean out the baths often.
- **Cut** back nettles in your butterfly patch now to encourage new growth from which butterflies and other insects can benefit later this summer.
- **Baby** hedgehogs will be appearing this month, so consider leaving out water and some meat (not fish) based cat or dog food for them.
- **Grass** growth slows on lawns in summer, so mow them as little as possible to allow lawn weeds to flower, providing food for pollinating insects.

### VEGETABLES/HERBS

- **Elephant** garlic, a close relative of the leek, has cloves as large as orange segments and a more delicate flavour than other garlics. It's grown in the same way and harvested around now, as soon as the leaves die back. To protect against rust that can attack garlic, sprinkle wood ash, which contains potash, around the growing plants.
- **Keep** your peppers and tomatoes well-watered, as tomatoes are vulnerable to splitting if allowed to dry out and then given lots of water all at once
- **Sow** beetroot, spring cabbage, carrots, peas, radishes and lettuce.
- **Now** is the time to sow spring cabbage, turnips, Oriental vegetables, chicory, fennel and salads for winter cropping.
- **The** midsummer harvest can be overwhelming but it's vital to keep picking vegetables to stop them going to seed. Leafy salads, herbs and spinach should be cut, and then watered to keep them in growth - if allowed to dry out they will bolt and make the remaining leaves unusable. Dig up potatoes as you need them. Pick tomatoes and courgettes so they bear new fruit. Harvest beans and peas daily - even hard and inedible pods should be snapped off and discarded. This will stimulate new flowers and more fresh pods for later on. Use up gluts by making chutney, and sauces and soups for freezing.
- **Beetroot** need three months of growing to develop good-sized beets for cropping. Those sown now can be harvested to eat or stored over winter, so sow greater quantities now to keep your stores full.
- **Many** herbs, such as fennel, will flower and produce viable seed, which you can collect to sow now for next year. Allow to ripen on the plant then cut, clean off the chaff and keep in a dark, dry and cool place.
- **Pick** leafy herbs regularly so plants continue to produce plenty of fresh foliage. Dry or freeze the leaves for use during winter months.
- **Sow** oriental greens and salad onions for use in autumnal salads.
- **Freshen** up supplies of leafy herbs, such as lemon verbena, marjoram, mint and sage, by taking a few cuttings now. The shrubbier cuttings can be rooted in a cold frame or sheltered spot in the garden. The softer shoots need some humidity, so put the pots in a plastic bag or propagator until the cuttings have rooted.
- **Veg** to be sown outdoors: Beetroot, carrots, peas, radishes and lettuce. Having harvested your summer crops it is now time to plant for winter. The vegetables to plant now are broccoli, calabrese, kale and winter cauliflowers, which if you haven't raised your own plants from seed can be purchased from garden centres as young plants.

- **Harvesting:** Pull baby carrots when finger size. Baby parsnips when top of roots measures 5cm across. Courgettes once they reach 15cm long. Dwarf French beans when they reach 10cm long. Garlic and onions when leaves turn yellow and bend over. Radish when small and tender. Peas when pods feel full but are still tender. Peppers and tomatoes as they become ripe. Runner beans when a decent size but still tender. Summer cauliflower and first early potatoes.
- **Early** in the month, sow a late crop of French and runner beans in a pot or directly into well-prepared soil, for a late-summer harvest.

### TREES/SHRUBS/BULBS/FLOWERS

- **Tie** in new growth on roses to support the large flowers
- **Plant** any remaining autumn flowering bulbs
- **Divide** begonias to keep your plants fresh and vigorous. Snip off flowers and older leaves first to give the division more energy for root growth, Allow fleshy cuts to dry for an hour before potting. **1.** Choose the leafy begonias that shoot foliage from the base as not all can be divided. **2.** Divide by prising the root ball apart from the top, being careful to keep buds on each section. **3.** Pot each piece into new potting compost and keep it at the same level as it was before, Water sparingly to avoid rots.
- **Avoid** the heat of the day for picking your blooms and cut them with as long a stem as possible. Strip the flower leaves, then plunge straight into a deep bucket of cold water for a few hours before re-cutting and arranging. Picked flowers can last for days if they are conditioned properly before you put them in a vase. Seal sappy stems with a quick dip in boiling water. Woody stems do best with a vertical split up through the base and hollow stems fill with water more efficiently if the water is a little warm. Gladioli, lilies, rudbeckia, cleome, sweet peas and zinnias give long-lasting blooms for several days.
- **Propagate** spring and early summer-flowering clematis from intermodal cuttings taken this month. Select strong, non-flowering shoots on this year's growth. **1.** Trim your cutting to a strong node with a 5cm stem below. Then remove one of the leaf sets and trim the other. **2.** Fill a pot with propagation compost mixed with grit to prevent rotting from overwatering. **3.** Insert the cutting right down to the leaf around the edge of the pot and firm. Water and put in a cold frame or propagator to root.
- **Prune** rambling roses that have finished their flowering season.
- **Give** shrubs a foliar feed (such as a liquid feed or sachet of sequestered iron feed mixed into water) using a sprayer or watering can if your shrub is short of nutrients. Plants that are yellow or pale, particularly between the veins, are showing signs of nutrient deficiency. Prevent future problems by applying a general fertiliser around the shrub next spring to keep it well fed.
- **A** pond can have a mixture of plants under the water, floating across the surface and emerging from the edges. These will grow quickly in summer's warm water and some can be invasive, so will need to be tended just as you would with plants in borders. Deadhead flowering pond plants to encourage them to keep flowering for longer. You need to cut off the blooms before they fall off to rot in the water. Remove unsightly dying leaves regularly before they start to rot and deplete the water of oxygen at a crucial time now the pond is full of creatures.
- **Keep** the areas around newly planted trees and shrubs free of weeds and well-watered.
- **Plan** crown lifting on trees (removing a few lower branches to let in light) by marking the branches you want to cut off in winter.
- **Pull** out flowering stems of willow herb before they set seeds.
- **Trim** evergreen topiary plants such as bay to maintain the desired shape. Remove any suckers growing from lower down on the main stem.
- **Cut** back the flowered growth on shrubs that bloom in early summer, such as *Philadelphus* and *Weigela*, to healthy new growth lower down. Prune the oldest woody stems back to ground level.

### FRUIT

- **You** should be picking gooseberries, blackcurrants, red currants, white currants, blueberries and summer raspberries
- **Raspberries** are easy and reliable if they are given conditions they like. They are happiest in coolish, dampish summers and can happily fruit in some shade. The roots must be cool and not dry out, so a generous mulch in spring is vital, although they prefer free-draining soil. Summer-fruiting ones produce their crop on the canes that were formed the previous summer, so by July there are plenty of new

green canes with no fruit at all and last year's brown ones, which will have been tied in securely to wires the previous autumn, should be profuse with lovely, dark pink fruit

- **Prop** up plum tree branches if they are heavy with fruit.
- **Cut** back strawberry plants after fruiting. Water and weed between them.
- **Train** in canes of cultivated blackberries and loganberries.
- **Harvest** blueberries now picking individual fruits by hand and put them straight into a container, being careful not to bruise them. Discard any that show signs of rot. Blueberries will ripen on the bush over several weeks, even longer if you have different varieties. Only pick the bluest fruit, as they won't continue to ripen off the bush. Blueberries will stay fresh for a day or two in the fridge. Eat fresh, freeze them individually on trays or in bags, or make them into jams.
- **Thin** apples by reducing the number of small fruits per cluster down to one or two to improve the size and quality of the apples, and keep the tree in good health for future fruiting. Leave the best formed fruit in each cluster. From June onward you may have noticed a few immature fruits starting to drop from plants as part of a natural process. However, you may also need to do some manual thinning.
- **After** your gooseberries and redcurrants have been picked, trim the side shoots to a short spur. Retie to any supports where necessary and be ready to train the vigorous growth.
- **Look** for holes in fruit-cage netting and make sure it is taut. This will prevent birds getting trapped in the netting, and also better protect your produce.
- **Pinch** out the tips of vigorous, leafy growth on citrus plants to keep them looking tidy and to help maintain an even shape.

### GREENHOUSES/COLD FRAMES

- **Plants** are growing rapidly now, especially in the heat of the greenhouse. Fertiliser in most compost will feed a plant for around six weeks so you will need to feed anything potted up for longer than that.
- **Fungal** disease thrives in humid air so it is worth ventilating the greenhouse to get some air exchange, even though it will increase the plants' need for watering. Ventilation also reduces the extreme differences in day and night temperatures that add to plant stress. Automatic roof vents and side louvres are the best combination as when open, air is drawn gently up through the house. On the hottest days, keep the doors open too, use shading and damp down the paths or soil surface with water as this will lower the overall temperature.
- **Remove** dead leaves and fading flowers promptly.
- **Give** extra care to any plants you transfer outside. They can suddenly wilt when exposed to sun and wind, so water well.
- **Water** nematodes onto the compost if you spot vine-weevil leaf notches.
- **Greenhouse** tomatoes are a rewarding crop to grow - protected environment will ensure that at least some of them ripen, which cannot be said for those grown outdoors. Pinch out any side-shoots growing from leaf axils regularly. This focuses energy on the growth of fruits and improves air circulation. Tie in the main stem to a cane or support system as it grows. Use soft twine to prevent damage to the stem. Ties can be spaced about 25cm apart. Watering evenly will avoid blossom end rot, and planting small-flowered tagetes (French marigolds) in the same compost as the tomato plants will help repel whitefly - the tomato's greatest enemy. Pick each fruit as it is ready (keep an eye on when it reaches full colour and has a rich tomato smell) by gently twisting it from the fruit cluster. You will encounter relatively few problems provided you ventilate the greenhouse in warm weather and shade plants from scorching sunshine.
- **Greenhouses** and polytunnels are both very useful, but pests can thrive in the warm conditions. Close observation when watering should be part of your routine. Stunted shoot tips and white moult casts are signs of aphids. Caught early you can gain control by carefully blasting them off with a hose. Clean the greenhouse annually and keep the floors weed free as weeds can host and hide pests. You'll find aphids will strike sickly plants harder than their healthier neighbours, and if spraying with veg-friendly insecticide proves ineffective, these plants should be disposed of to avoid infesting others.
- **If** your greenhouse is in a sunny spot, it can quickly get too hot on sunny days. Put up shading material or paint with shading paint to reduce the temperature inside.
- **Whitefly** can become a real problem in the greenhouse, especially in warm weather when numbers increase rapidly. Choose between spraying with insecticide or treating with a biological control.

## HOUSE PLANTS

- **There** are four ways to make more houseplants. **1. Stem cuttings:** Plants to pick: Gardenia and philodendron. How to do it: cut through a healthy young stem just below a leaf node so that you have a cutting about 10cm long. Remove the lower leaves, dip into rooting hormone and push into a pot of seed/cuttings compost. Water and cover with a clear plastic bag. Keep in bright indirect light at around 25°C until rooted. **2. Leaf cuttings:** Plants to pick: Bergonia rex and Streptocarpus. How to do it: remove a leaf from the plant and cut through each main vein in one or two places. Pin it with the veins facing down, onto a tray of moist seed/cutting compost. New plantlets emerge from the cut veins. **3. Division:** Plants to pick: Sasevieria and Cymbidium. How to do it: divide the clumping plants into smaller sections, ensuring each piece has its own growing shoots and root system, and pot up separately. **4. Air Layering:** plants to pick: Ficus or Schefflera. How to do it: partially cut through an area in the middle of a stem about 30cm from a shoot tip and apply rooting hormone to the cut. Wrap a layer of moist sphagnum moss around the wound area and secure with plastic packaging tape to keep moist; once rooted, separate the cutting from the parent plant and pot up.